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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/784,739	02/23/2004	Michael S. Beck	2063.007600/VS-00620	2452
23720 7590 03/15/2007 WILLIAMS, MORGAN & AMERSON 10333 RICHMOND, SUITE 1100 HOUSTON, TX 77042			EXAMINER MCCREARY, LEONARD	
			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			3616	
SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD OF RESPONSE		MAIL DATE	DELIVERY MODE	
3 MONTHS		03/15/2007	PAPER	

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire 6 MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/784,739

Applicant(s)

BECK ET AL.

Examiner

Leonard J. McCreary, Jr.

Art Unit

3616

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 15 December 2006.
- 2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-23 and 44-63 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-23 and 44-63 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 23 February 2006 is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)
- Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.

- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
- Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application.
- 6) ☐ Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

1. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

2. Claims 1-5, 7-11, 13-15, 17-22, 44-48, 50-54, 56-58, and 60-63 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by US 5,517,414 to Hrovat. Hrovat discloses a traction control system with active suspension comprising the following:

- a. A method of controlling traction in a vehicle having a rotatably articulating suspension, comprising: determining a performance characteristic of the vehicle; determining a performance characteristic of at least one of a plurality of wheel assemblies of the rotatably articulating suspension; comparing the performance characteristic of the vehicle and the performance characteristic of the at least one of the plurality of wheel assemblies; and altering the performance of the vehicle based upon the comparison to affect the vehicle's traction (Fig. 6b) (claim 1.)
- b. Determining the performance characteristic of the vehicle comprises determining a velocity of the vehicle; and determining the performance characteristic of the at least one of the plurality of wheel assemblies comprises determining a rotational velocity of the at least one of the plurality of wheel assemblies (col 2, lin 51-67) (claim 2, 45.)

- c. Determining the performance characteristic of the vehicle comprises a load on a first of a plurality of wheel assemblies; and determining the performance characteristic of the at least one of the plurality of wheel assemblies comprises a load on another one or more of the plurality of wheel assemblies (Fig. 5b) (claim 3, 46.)
- d. A method of controlling traction in a vehicle having a rotatably articulating suspension, comprising: determining a load on each of a plurality of wheel assemblies of the rotatably articulating suspension; and adjusting the suspension through rotation such that each of the loads is within a predetermined range (Fig. 5b) (claim 4.)
- e. Determining the load comprises sensing a load on each suspension arm 86 of the plurality of wheel assemblies (claim 5, 48.)
- f. Adjusting the rotatably articulating suspension comprises adjusting the rotatably articulating suspension to substantially equalize the loads (Fig. 5b) (claim 7, 50.)
- g. Adjusting the rotatably articulating suspension comprises articulating at least one of the plurality of wheel assemblies with respect to a chassis of the vehicle (Fig. 2 – admitted prior art) (claim 8, 51.)
- h. Determining a lightly loaded wheel assembly of the plurality of wheel assemblies, such that adjusting the rotatably articulating suspension comprises articulating the lightly loaded wheel assembly with respect to a chassis of the vehicle (Figs. 2 – admitted prior art, 5b) (claim 9, 52.)

- i. A method of controlling traction in a vehicle having a rotatably articulating suspension, comprising: acquiring load data for a plurality of wheel assemblies of the rotatably articulating suspension; identifying a lightly loaded wheel assembly of the plurality of wheel assemblies from the load data; and rotatably articulating the lightly loaded wheel assembly with respect to a chassis of the vehicle (Figs. 5a, 5b) (claim 10.)
- j. Acquiring the load data comprises sensing a load on each suspension arm 86 of the plurality of wheel assemblies (claim 11, 54.)
- k. Articulating the lightly loaded wheel assembly comprises articulating the lightly loaded wheel assembly to substantially equalize the load on each of the plurality of wheel assemblies (Fig. 5b) (claim 13, 56.)
- l. A method of controlling traction in a vehicle having a rotatably articulating suspension, comprising: determining whether forces on each of a plurality of wheel assemblies of the rotatably articulating suspension are substantially equal; determining whether a rotational velocity of each wheel of the plurality of wheel assemblies corresponds to a velocity of the vehicle; and rotatably articulating the articulated suspension such that each of the forces is within a predetermined range if the forces are not substantially equal and at least one of the rotational velocities fails to correspond to the velocity of the vehicle (Figs. 5a, 5b) (claim 14.)
- m. Determining whether forces on each of a plurality of wheel assemblies of the rotatably articulating suspension are substantially equal comprises sensing a

load on each suspension arm 86 of the plurality of wheel assemblies (claim 15, 58.)

n. Rotatably articulating the articulated suspension comprises adjusting the articulated suspension to substantially equalize the forces (Fig. 5b) (claim 17, 60.)

o. Adjusting the rotatably articulating suspension comprises articulating at least one of the plurality of wheel assemblies with respect to a chassis of the vehicle (Figs. 2 – admitted prior art, 5b) (claim 18, 61.)

p. Determining a lightly loaded wheel assembly of the plurality of wheel assemblies, such that adjusting the rotatably articulating suspension comprises articulating the lightly loaded wheel assembly with respect to a chassis of the vehicle (Figs. 2 – admitted prior art, 5a, 5b) (claim 19, 62.)

q. Reducing the rotational velocity of one of the tires if the forces are substantially equal and the one of the tires has a determined rotational velocity that is greater than that which corresponds to the velocity of the vehicle (col 1, lin 57-58) (claim 20, 63.)

r. Reducing the rotational velocity comprises reducing the rotational velocity of the tire by braking (col 7, lin 25) (claim 21.)

s. Reducing the rotational velocity comprises reducing the rotational velocity of the tire by at least partially removing power to the tire (col 1, lin 57-59) (claim 22.)

t. A vehicle, comprising: a chassis; a suspension 86 rotatably articulating relative to the chassis and including a plurality of wheel assemblies 20a, 20b, 20c, 20d; means for determining a performance characteristic of the vehicle; means for determining a performance characteristic of at least one of a plurality of wheel assemblies of the rotatably articulating suspension; means for comparing the performance characteristic of the vehicle and the performance characteristic of the at least one of the plurality of wheel assemblies; and means for altering the performance of the vehicle based upon the comparison to affect the vehicle's traction (Figs. 2, 6b) (claim 44.)

u. A vehicle, comprising: a chassis; a suspension 86 rotatably articulating relative to the chassis and including a plurality of wheel assemblies 20a, 20b, 20c, 20d; means for determining a load on each of a plurality of wheel assemblies of the rotatably articulating suspension; and adjusting the suspension through rotation such that each of the loads is within a predetermined range (Figs. 2, 5b) (claim 47.)

v. A vehicle, comprising: a chassis; a suspension 86 rotatably articulating relative to the chassis and including a plurality of wheel assemblies 20a, 20b, 20c, 20d; means for acquiring load data for a plurality of wheel assemblies of the rotatably articulating suspension; means for identifying a lightly loaded wheel assembly of the plurality of wheel assemblies from the load data; and means for rotatably articulating the lightly loaded wheel assembly with respect to a chassis of the vehicle (Figs. 2, 5a, 5b) (claim 53.)

w. A vehicle, comprising: a chassis; a suspension 86 rotatably articulating relative to the chassis and including a plurality of wheel assemblies 20a, 20b, 20c, 20d; means for determining whether forces on each of a plurality of wheel assemblies of the rotatably articulating suspension are substantially equal; means for determining whether a rotational velocity of each wheel of the plurality of wheel assemblies corresponds to a velocity of the vehicle; and means for rotatably articulating the articulated suspension such that each of the forces is within a predetermined range if the forces are not substantially equal and at least one of the rotational velocities fails to correspond to the velocity of the vehicle (Figs. 5a, 5b) (claim 57.)

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

3. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

4. Claims 6, 12, 16, 49, 55, and 59 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over US 5,517,414 to Hrovat in view of US 6,481,801 to Krueger et al. The disclosure of Hrovat is discussed above. Hrovat does not teach measuring wheel load using tire pressure sensors. Krueger discloses an understeer correction device and teaches the following:

- x. Determining the load comprises sensing a pressure of each tire of the plurality of wheel assemblies (abstract, col 4, lin 39-58) (claim 6, 49.)
- y. Acquiring the load data comprises sensing a pressure of each tire of the plurality of wheel assemblies (abstract, col 4, lin 39-58) (claim 12, 55.)
- z. Determining whether forces on each of a plurality of wheel assemblies of the rotatably articulating suspension are substantially equal comprises sensing a pressure of each tire of the plurality of wheel assemblies (abstract, col 4, lin 39-58) (claim 16, 59.)

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of invention to modify the traction control system of Hrovat to include tire pressure sensors as taught by Krueger so as to measure the normal forces between wheels and the ground that can be used to dynamically alter the vehicle suspension characteristics.

5. Claim 23 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over US 5,517,414 to Hrovat in view of US 5,762,407 to Stacey et al. The disclosure of Hrovat is discussed above. Hrovat does not teach regenerative braking. Stacey discloses a brake system control and apparatus and teaches the following:

- aa. Reducing the rotational velocity comprises reducing the rotational velocity of the tire by regenerative braking (col 5, lin 40-60.)

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of invention to modify the traction control system of Hrovat to include regenerative brake blending capabilities as taught by Stacey so as to more quickly counter wheel slip.

Response to Arguments

6. Applicant's arguments filed 15 December 2006 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive. Applicant argues that neither Hrovat nor Krueger teaches or suggests a rotational articulation. Examiner disagrees, and notes that the prior art of Hrovat shown in figure 2, which serves as the basis of Hrovat's improvement, illustrates a suspension arm 86, which articulates rotatably about a pivot connected to the chassis. As broadly recited, Hrovat discloses the claimed invention.

Conclusion

7. **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL.** Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

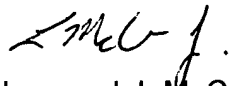
A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the mailing date of this final action.

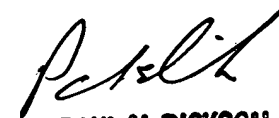
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Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Leonard J. McCreary, Jr. whose telephone number is 571-272-8766. The examiner can normally be reached on 0700-1700 M-F.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Paul Dickson can be reached on 571-272-6669. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.


Leonard J. McCreary, Jr.
Examiner
Art Unit 3616


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3/17/07